

United States Department of Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Coos Bay District

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

EA Number: EA OR125-06-10

BLM Coos Bay District Office

Lease/Serial/Case file No.: N/A

**Proposed Action Title/Type:** North Spit Snowy Plover Habitat Maintenance: Shell Placement

**Location of Proposed Action:** T25S, R14W, Sections 24, 25, and 26 (see Exhibit 1). Action would occur on the North Spit Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

**Applicant:** Bureau of Land Management

**Conformance With Applicable Land Use Plan:** This EA is tiered to and in conformance with the *Coos Bay District Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement* (USDI BLM 1994) and its *Record of Decision* (USDI BLM 1995) and the *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) on Management of Habitat for Late Successional and Old Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (Northwest Forest Plan [NFP])* (USDA/USDI 1994) and its *Record of Decision* (USDA/USDI 1994a) as supplemented and/or amended by:

- The Record of Decision dated January 2001, entitled “*Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines*” (USDA/USDI 2001) as reinstated, including any amendments or modifications to the 2001 *Record of Decision* that were in effect as of March 21, 2004.
- *Management of Port-Orford-cedar in Southwest Oregon Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement* (USDA/USDI 2004b) and its *Record of Decision* (USDA/USDI 2004c).
- *The Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement Clarification of Language in the 1994 Record of Decision for the Northwest Forest Plan National Forests and Bureau of Land Management Districts Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl Proposal To Amend Wording About the Aquatic Conservation Strategy* (USDA/USDI 2003) and its *Record of Decision* (USDA/USDI 2004d).

This EA is also tiered to and in conformance with the *Coos Bay Integrated Noxious Weed Program* (EA OR 120-97-11). This plan has been reviewed to determine if the proposed action conforms with the land use plan's terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1601.5.

In addition, the actions and intent of the proposed project are in accordance with three Environmental Assessments pertaining to snowy plover habitat enhancement and restoration on the North Spit of Coos Bay: EA OR126-94-05, EA OR125-98-25, and EA OR125-05-13.

**Remarks:** The Proposed Action is tiered to and in compliance with the *Coos Bay District Resource Management Plan (RMP) & Environmental Impact Statement* and its *Record of Decision* (BLM 1995). The RMP has been determined to be consistent with the standards and guidelines for healthy lands at the land use plan scale and associated timelines. Additionally, it complies with the *Biological Opinion (BO) for Management of Federal Lands on the North Spit of Coos Bay, Oregon* (USFWS 2000) which calls for the restoration and maintenance of the Western snowy plover HRAs, including the addition of shells. The BO concluded that the Proposed Action would not be likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the Western snowy plover nor would it be likely to destroy or adversely modify Western snowy plover critical habitat. Furthermore, because the Proposed Action would occur outside of the nesting season, disturbance to nesting plovers would be avoided. Lastly, the Proposed Action conforms to the *North Spit Plan Update* (BLM 2005) which discusses management and enhancement of snowy plover habitat.

### Need for Proposed Action:

The North Spit of Coos Bay is the most important snowy plover breeding site on the Oregon Coast. The Proposed Action will enhance plover habitat via the deposition of oyster shells on the Habitat Restoration Areas (HRAs) currently managed and maintained annually by BLM. The addition of oyster shells improves nesting habitat by providing substrate to areas of bare sand. The high productivity associated with the 1994 HRA, administered by the Army Corps of Engineers, is attributed in part to its high density of shells which seemingly enhances the area's suitability for nesting plovers. The Proposed Action will augment BLM's investment in plover habitat restoration by increasing the odds that nesting success will improve on the currently maintained BLM HRAs.

### Description of Proposed Action:

The Proposed Action is to use an excavator to load up to 300 cubic yards of oyster shells from a local oyster grower into an off-road rock truck with a 20 cubic yard capacity. Shells would be hauled to the North Spit and slowly dumped onto portions of the BLM-managed HRAs. The total area treated would depend upon the amount of shell available and would most likely range from 30-50 acres. Shells would be donated at no cost to the BLM. The maximum round trip distance between the shell source and the Spit would be no more than about 40 miles. Deposited shells would be further distributed by BLM with a tractor and plow during routine maintenance operations to clear European beachgrass on the HRAs. Work would occur subsequent to the snowy plover nesting season in October or November of 2006.

### Environmental Impacts to Critical Elements of the Human Environment:

<u>Critical Elements</u>	<u>Affected</u>		<u>Critical Elements</u>	<u>Affected</u>	
	Yes	No		Yes	No
Air Quality	_____	<u>X</u>	T&E, SSSP Species	_____	<u>X</u>
ACECs	_____	<u>X</u>	Wastes, Hazardous/Solid	_____	<u>X</u>
Cultural Resources	_____	<u>X</u>	Water Quality	_____	<u>X</u>
Farmlands, Prime/Unique	_____	<u>X</u>	Wetlands/Riparian Zones/ACS	_____	<u>X</u>
Floodplains	_____	<u>X</u>	Wild & Scenic Rivers	_____	<u>X</u>
Unresolved conflicts	_____	<u>X</u>	Wilderness	_____	<u>X</u>
Noxious Weed Management	_____	<u>X</u>	Port Orford Cedar Management	_____	<u>X</u>
Environmental Justice Concerns	_____	<u>X</u>	Energy production, transmission	_____	<u>X</u>
Native American religious concerns and/or Indian trust resources	_____	<u>X</u>			

### Description of Impacts to Specific Elements of the Human Environment:

No adverse impacts are associated with the Proposed Action. In regards to the Critical Elements listed above, several beneficial impacts would occur. Enhancing habitat for the Western snowy plover, a threatened species, is in keeping with special status species management objectives for the North Spit ACEC. The plover would benefit by an increase in nesting substrate associated with higher nest productivity. Furthermore, shelled areas appear to discourage dense re-growth of European beachgrass thus eliminating competition for resources with the pink sandverbena, a plant considered sensitive by the BLM and listed as endangered by the State of Oregon.

No impacts to fisheries resources or waterways would result from the Proposed Action.

### Description of Mitigation Measures and Residual Impacts:

No mitigation measures are necessary.

**Persons/Agencies Consulted:** Fred Seavey, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**List of Preparers and Contributors:**

Madeleine Vander Heyden	Project Proponent, Wildlife Biologist, North Spit ACEC Manager
Nancy Brian	District Botanist
Tim Barnes	District Geologist
Bob Golden	North Spit Park Ranger
Nancy Zepf	Outdoor Recreation Planner
Stephan Samuels	District Archaeologist
Mike Cook	Noxious Weeds
Scott Knowles	Environmental Justice
Paul Gammon	Hazmat Coordinator

**Date:** April 4, 2006

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**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/DECISION RECORD.**

I have reviewed this environmental assessment including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts. I have determined that the proposed action will not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an EIS is not required. I have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the approved land use plan. It is my decision to implement the project as described in the Description of the Proposed Action section.

Decision recommended by: NRSA:\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_  
Kathy Wall

Decision recommended by: NRSA:\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_  
Paul Fontaine

Decision Approved by: FM:\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_  
M. Elaine Raper